WHAT IF™

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WHAT IF™

THE ORIGINAL *MARVEL BULLPEN* HAD BECOME THE

Fantastic Four?

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STAN! EVEN MY FIREBALLS WON'T STOP THAT MONSTER!

KEEP TRYING, SOL! COME ON, JACK--FLO!

RIGHT! IT'S REAL-LIFE CLOBBERIN' TIME!

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Stan Lee presents: A STUNNING SAGA OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY!

WRITER, ARTIST, AND EDITOR JACK KIRBY • INKING & LETTERING MIKE ROYER & BILL WRAY • COLORING CARL GAFFORD • SERIES EDITOR ROY THOMAS

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I AM THE WATCHER, AND IT IS MY TASK TO OBSERVE THE REALM OF THE ALTERNATE UNIVERSES.

THIS CONTEXT EMBRACES AN ENDLESS SUCCESSION OF DUPLICATE EARTHS DIFFERING FROM ONE ANOTHER AT CRITICAL POINTS.

IN THIS PARTICULAR REALITY, THE FANTASTIC FOUR WAS NOT FORMED BY REED RICHARDS, BEN GRIMM, AND JOHNNY AND SUE STORM.

LISTEN, SOL! FLAME ON IF YOU HAVE TO -- BUT DON'T SINGE YOUR FRIENDS!

SORRY ABOUT THAT!

THE LAST TIME HE WAS SORRY, I GOT SUN-BURNED IN A VERY SENSITIVE AREA!

DO BE CAREFUL, BOYS! THAT CAVE GIANT IS TERRIBLY STRONG.

YES, I'LL BE GONE FOR A FEW DAYS -- CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE!

"INSTEAD, MISTER FANTASTIC IS ACTUALLY EDITOR STAN LEE, WHO STILL OCCUPIES THE ROOM AT THE TOP IN THE TEEMING FANTASY FACTORY KNOWN AS MARVEL COMICS...

ARE YOU LEAVING WITH STAN AGAIN, SOL?

WE'LL BE BACK AT OUR DESKS BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

"SOL BRODSKY, MARVEL V.P. AND STAN'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND, IS SECRETLY THE HUMAN TORCH!

THIS SHOULD HOLD 'EM UNTIL THE OTHERS AND I RETURN.

"AS FOR JACK KIRBY, HARD-WORKING ARTIST, LIFE IS A FLURRY OF FRANTIC PENCIL-PUSHING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE SUDDEN CHANGE WHICH WILL TRANSFORM HIM INTO --THE THING!

OOPS! I'LL BE LATE FOR OUR TRIP -- TO THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MURROW.

"AND THIS REALITY'S INVISIBLE GIRL IS ACTUALLY MARVEL COMICS' SECRETARY FLO STEINBERG, BETTER KNOWN UNDER THE SOBRIQUET "FABULOUS FLO."

"HOW DID SUCH A FANTASTIC FOUR COME TO BE? WATCH, AND ALL SHALL BE REVEALED...

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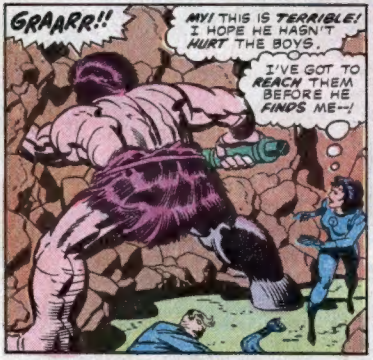
GROWRR!
SSPOW!
DON'T I KNOW IT!
LOOK OUT! HE'S FIRING THE WEAPON!


GRAARR!!
MY! THIS IS TERRIBLE! I HOPE HE HASN'T HURT THE BOYS.
I'VE GOT TO REACH THEM BEFORE HE FINDS ME--!

SUDDENLY...
ROWRR
OH! HI, FELLA! YOU WOULDN'T MISTREAT A LADY-- WOULD YOU--?

I-I THINK HE WOULD!
HONESTLY! I'VE NEVER MET SO MANY WILD TYPES UNTIL I BECAME PART OF THIS TEAM.
MAYBE I SHOULD'VE STAYED WORKING FOR MA BELL!

IT WOULD BE SMART TO BECOME INVISIBLE-- RIGHT NOW!

WHAT'S MORE, I'LL THROW A FORCE FIELD AROUND THAT HAIRY CREEP BEFORE HE GETS VIOLENT AGAIN.

IF HE'S DUMB ENOUGH TO FIRE THAT GADGET, IT'LL EXPLODE INSIDE THE FORCE FIELD.

GOODNESS! HE DID IT! THE POOR BRUTE TOOK THE FULL FORCE OF THE SHOCK!
WAM!

I'VE REMOVED THE FORCE FIELD. IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THERE'S ANY NEED FOR IT NOW.

MISTER CAVE MAN SHOULD BE OUT OF ACTION FOR A WEEK. BUT STAN WOULDN'T LIKE IT IF I DIDN'T DOUBLE-CHECK AND MAKE CERTAIN OF IT.

HUMPH!: THAT FACE COULD START A PANIC ON ANY STREET IN BOSTON! BUT DESPITE ALL THAT UGLINESS -- IT SOMEHOW LOOKS FAMILIAR.

NO, IT COULDN'T BE --!
THEN, MAYBE IT COULD...
MAYBE IT IS!

THEN...
RECOVERING FROM A SHOCK-BLAST ISN'T MY IDEA OF FUN -- BUT WHEN FLO'S YELLING IS ONE OF THE SIDE-EFFECTS -- IT'S MURDER.
BOYS! BOYS!
WOULD YOU PLEASE SOFTEN THOSE HIGH NOTES A TINY TREBLE, FLORENCE? WE CAN HEAR YOU!

STAN! I JUST TOOK A CLOSE LOOK AT THAT GIANT, AND GUESS WHAT? YOU'D NEVER BELIEVE IT --!
I HATE TO STRESS THIS, FLO -- BUT YOU'RE SHAKING YOUR BOSS TO PIECES!

WHILE SHE'S DOING THAT, MAYBE FLO CAN TELL US WHO FLATTENED THAT OVER-GROWN HAIR-BALL.
BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I THINK HE'S DOCTOR MURROW!
JUST REMEMBER, KID: ME, BOSS--YOU, SECRETARY... GOT THAT?

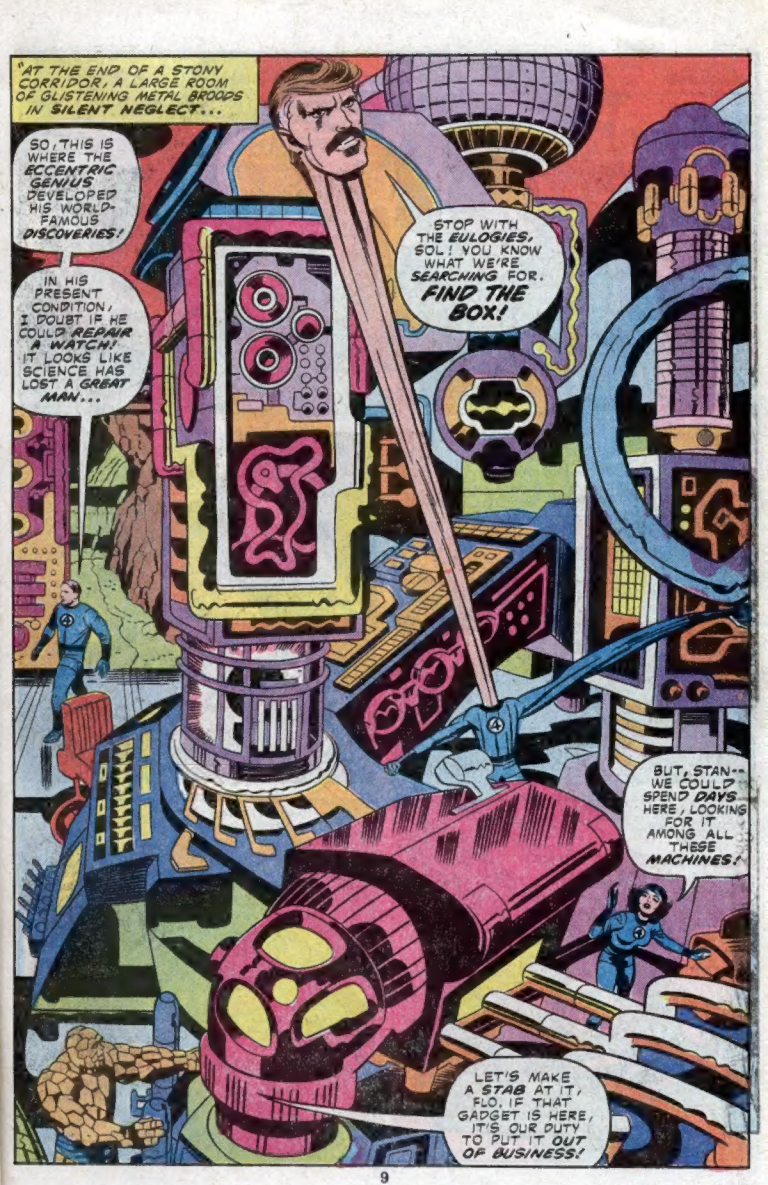
DOCTOR MURROW!? DID YOU SAY DOCTOR MURROW?
WHERE IS HE?
I-I THINK HE'S THERE -- ON THE GROUND-- SOMEWHAT LARGER AND UGLIER-- BUT IT'S HIM-- THE MAN WE CAME TO SEE!

IMPOSSIBLE! AND YET--IT DOES MAKE SENSE!
DO YOU MEAN HE WAS SOMEHOW... CHANGED INTO--THAT?
IF HE'S MURROW--THE ANSWER'S OBVIOUS.

BY THE FAITHFUL FANS OF FOOM! FLO IS DEAD ON TARGET! THERE'S NO MISTAKING THOSE FAMILIAR FEATURES.
WE'D HAVE RECOGNIZED HIM EARLIER IF HE HADN'T ATTACKED US.
HE'S BEEN TRANSFORMED, JUST LIKE WE WERE.

AT THAT MOMENT...
OH, IT'S YOU! WE COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT YOU, SOLLY. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THAT SINCE I BECAME A HUMAN TORCH.
SAY! ISN'T THAT--?
IT SURE IS, PAL.

THIS COULD ONLY HAVE HAPPENED ONE WAY. LET'S CHECK HIS LABORATORY!
WHAT AN ODD PLACE FOR A SCIENTIST TO CHOOSE FOR HIS WORK.
HE'S A RECLUSE, REMEMBER?


"AT THE END OF A STONY CORRIDOR, A LARGE ROOM OF GLISTENING METAL BROODS IN SILENT NEGLECT...
SO, THIS IS WHERE THE ECCENTRIC GENIUS DEVELOPED HIS WORLD-FAMOUS DISCOVERIES!
IN HIS PRESENT CONDITION, I DOUBT IF HE COULD REPAIR A WATCH! IT LOOKS LIKE SCIENCE HAS LOST A GREAT MAN...
STOP WITH THE EULOGIES, SOL! YOU KNOW WHAT WE'RE SEARCHING FOR. FIND THE BOX!
BUT, STAN-- WE COULD SPEND DAYS HERE, LOOKING FOR IT AMONG ALL THESE MACHINES!
LET'S MAKE A STAB AT IT, FLO. IF THAT GADGET IS HERE, IT'S OUR DUTY TO PUT IT OUT OF BUSINESS!

"HOURS OF PAINSTAKING SEARCH PROVE FRUITLESS... BUT THE GRIM WORK CONTINUES...

I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY *WIRES* AND *RODS* IN MY ENTIRE LIFE! THERE'S JUST NO *END* TO THEM!

TAKE ANOTHER *BREAK*, FLO.

FIND ANY *HIDDEN CLUES*, SOL?

I'M BURNING THROUGH A LOT OF *METAL*, BUT I'M NOT EVEN *WARM*!

THERE'S NOTHING *UNDER* THIS BIG STUFF. IT MUST BE *ELSE-WHERE*!

KEEP LOOKING! THAT BOX IS THE ONLY EXPLANATION FOR MURROW'S *CHANGE*. IT MUST BE A *NEW MODEL*, TOO; SO STAY *SHARP*!

AT LAST! AN *EMPTY SPACE* WITHOUT WIRES OR ANYTHING!

BEEP BEEP BEEP

I WONDER WHAT *THIS* IS?! IT MAKES SUCH *PRETTY* SOUNDS WHEN I *TOUCH* IT.

WANT TO *SEE* IT, STAN?

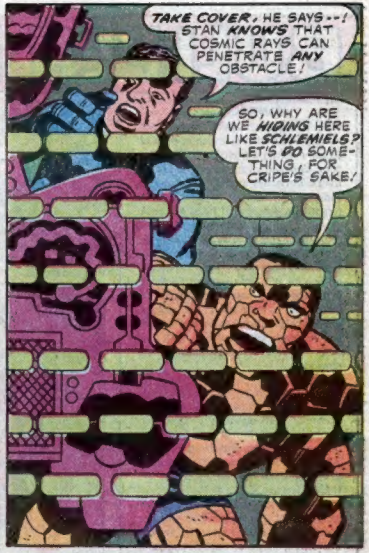
SURE! WHAT DOES IT *LOOK* LIKE?

WELL, NOW THAT I CAN SEE IT CLEARLY, IT LOOKS *EXACTLY* LIKE--

SKWEEEP! SKWEEP! SKWEEEP! --

--THE BOX WE'RE SEARCHING FOR--!

THIS WAY! WE'VE NO TIME TO *LOSE*!



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BULLPEN BULLETINS

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Well, it happened again! There I was, making a soul-stirring speech at good ol' James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia recently, when one of the frantic Marvelites in the madly-cheering audience reminded me of a promise I'd forgotten a decade ago! He said that I'd promised, in the late sixties, to do a column entitled "What is a Bigot?"— and then he pointed an accusing finger and sonorously intoned, "And we're still waiting for it"! Wow, with my laughable little memory I can hardly remember what I said an hour ago, so I'm assuming the forthright flamekeeper was correct, and herewith and forthwith shall that so-grievous oversight be summarily remedied!

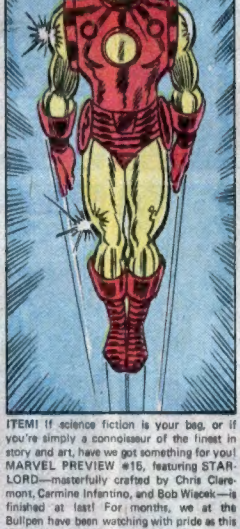
From where I sit, bigotry is one of the many stains upon the human escutcheon which must be eradicated before we can truthfully call ourselves civilized. It comes in many forms and shapes, but it's most easily recognized in the form of cruel and mindless generalizations; such as when you hear some yo-yo say "All Italians are like this", or "All Germans are like that", or "All women are so-and-so" or "All blacks, or Catholics, or Jews, or redheads, or whatever are like this"! Well, they may not be aware of it, but the turkeys that talk that way— and it's always done in a disparaging, put-down manner, of course— are bigots, plain and simple! Anyone with an I.Q. slightly above a cretin's has to know that *all* of any type of humans are never always the same. There are good people and bad people, and all categories in between— and you'll find 'em amongst all races, all religions, all sizes, shapes, and sexes. You wanna dislike someone? Be my guest. It's a free country. But do it because he or she has personally given you a reason to feel that way, not because of skin color, or religion, or foreign ancestry, or the shape of their toenails, or any other moronic, mixed-up, mindless motive! Because, if you justify your hatred by smearing everyone in any given group with the same brush, then you're a bigot, Charlie!

Okay, that's it. Never let it be said I don't keep my word when I promise to write about something— even if it happens to take ten years to get around to it!

Excelsior!

Stan

ITEM! In one way or another, *everyone* at Marvel is part of the crazed creative process that produces several dozen of the best comics magazines anywhere each month, but only a few folks can be listed in the credits. Actually, the artists, writers, editors and other Marvel stars whose names you've come to know would be lost without the services of our stalwart support troops. With that in mind, we'd like to take time out to thank Titanic TONY CERNIGLIA and his mighty mailroom crew, MIKE (Great "K") KUDZINOWSKI, DANIEL (Poppy) LOCARIO, and Hopalong JOHN GALVIN, for their efforts above and beyond the call of duty during Marvel's recent reorganization. Not only did they keep inter-office communications flowing smoothly throughout the reshuffling, but they pitched in to rearrange desks, cart furniture, and in general kept logistical problems from bogging down the creative process. Well done, guys!



ITEM! If science fiction is your beg, or if you're simply a connoisseur of the finest in story and art, have we got something for you! MARVEL PREVIEW #15, featuring STAR-LORD—masterfully crafted by Chris Claremont, Carmine Infantino, and Bob Wiacek—is finished at last! For months, we at the Bullpen have been watching with pride as this labor of love evolved, and we feel it's bound to be one of the most talked about epics ever. Okay, you've been warned! Get down to your newsstand *now* and pick up a copy before they're all sold! And, for heaven's sake, if you don't see it, *ask*!

ITEM! While you're slogging your way through the mundane mire of everyday life, does it ever occur to you that you're in danger of letting down and becoming (ugh) *normal*? Take heart, embattled ones, for mighty Marvel's resident wackos, under the direction of Possessed PAUL LAIKIN, have concocted the ultimate remedy for encroaching sanity, namely, CRAZY #42, which has been expanded to a full 80 pages of Daringly Dumb humor, outrageous parody and psychotic ramblings, all for only $1.00! We call it the LET'S GO CRAZY SUPER SPECIAL, and it's absolutely guaranteed to quell sane tendencies! It's on sale *now*!

ITEM! Meanwhile, back in the real world, it is our pleasure to announce the regular pencilling debut of a certain young artist by the name of JOHN ROMITA, JR. John, who currently holds down a regular nine-to-five job as a staff artist as well, will lend his considerable talents to drawing monthly adventures of the Invincible IRON MAN beginning with issue #115, on sale now! Those who have seen the work of Jazzy JOHN ROMITA, SR. (and who hasn't?) on The Amazing SPIDER-MAN, both in the comics and in his widely syndicated newspaper strip, know that Jet-propelled John Jr. has some rather large footsteps to follow in. We've got a feeling though, once you've seen his work, you'll agree with us that he's off to a fantabulous start!

ITEM! While we're at it, we might also mention the terrific job that Dashing DAVE WENZEL is doing pencilling on one of Marvel's most demanding series, the AVENGERS. Dave was there in our hour of need, stepping in to help complete the tenpart super-cosmic Magnum Opus begun by Jim (Trouble) Shooter and George (Pacesetter) Perez long ago! Dave's dynamic drawing seems to get better and better with each panel. We just love watching future Superstars develop!

ITEM! You may have noticed that yet *another* new art team has been bringing the INVADERS to still new heights of glory of late. Audacious ALAN KUPPERBERG and Fancy FRANK SPRINGER have combined, under the guidance of prestigious writer/editor Rascally ROY THOMAS, to provide a virtual visual feast that is well worth a mere 35¢ investment! Believe it!

ITEM! If you want to hear about the latest Marvel doings from the Man himself, STAN LEE will be guest-of-honor August 12th at the Atlanta (Georgia) Comics and Fantasy Fair, being held at Dunfey's Royal Hotel! So if you're in the area, or even if you're not, zoom on down and shake the hand that shook the hand of Irving Forbush!

THAT DAY CHANGED OUR *LIVES* AS WELL AS OUR *BODIES*.

HE PROBABLY *DIDN'T KNOW* THE BOX WAS IN HIS *LABORATORY*.

SURE... HE WENT ABOUT HIS WORK WHILE THIS THING SPRAYED HIM WITH *COSMIC RAYS!*

POOR MURROW! HE'LL NEVER *ADJUST* LIKE WE DID.

WE'VE STILL GOT TO NAB THE CRUMBS *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THIS.

IT SEEMS THAT THEY'RE ALWAYS ONE JUMP *AHEAD* OF US--BUT WE'RE *CLOSING* THE GAP WITH EACH TRIP.

OH, HOW I HATE THOSE *"S" PEOPLE*--WHOEVER THEY ARE!

DON'T WORRY, KID! *WE'LL FIND OUT!*

4

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT YOUR MIND IS BUZZING WITH *QUESTIONS* AT THIS POINT. BUT WE MUST RETURN TO THE *PAST* FOR ANSWERS...

"WE MUST RECAPTURE THAT AFOREMENTIONED *DAY* WHICH WAS SPENT ABOVE A BUSY THOROUGHFARE CALLED *MADISON AVENUE*, BACK IN THE *EARLY 1960'S*.

"*JACK KIRBY* HAD ARRIVED AT THE *MARVEL OFFICES* WITH SOME PENCILED PAGES FOR THE EDITOR, A FELLOW NAMED *STAN LEE*...*"

I DID MY *BEST*, AS USUAL, STAN. THIS BATCH WAS *FUN* TO DRAW.

LET'S *SEE* THE PAGES. DON'T KEEP THEM IN THE *FOLDER!*

BY THE *WAY*, JACK--

*PRE-BEARD AND PRE-MUSTACHE.--R.T.

--DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE'S A GROUP OF *TRUE BELIEVERS* WHO'VE CHOSEN OUR COMICS AS THE BASIS FOR SOME *GREAT EXPERIMENT?*

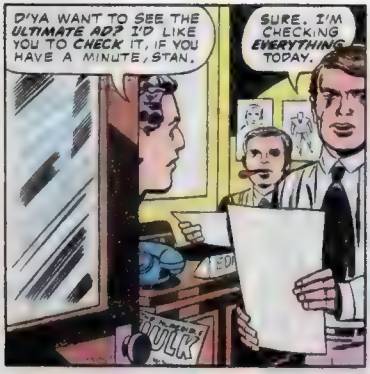
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE GETTING SOME INTERESTING *FAN MAIL*--

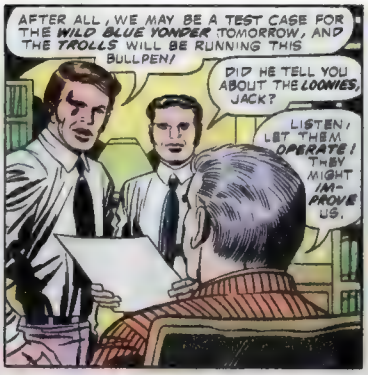
--BUT *WHY* ARE THESE *FRANKENSTEINERS* PICKING ON US?

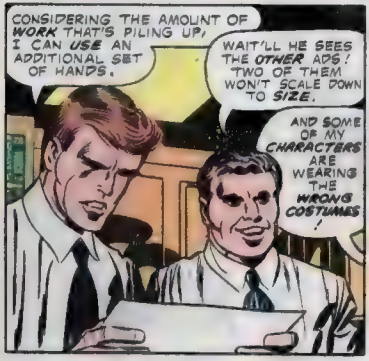
WHO KNOWS! THOSE GUYS ARE DEEP INTO *SCIENCE FICTION*--THEY THINK WE'D MAKE PERFECT SUBJECTS FOR THE *ULTIMATE FANTASY!*

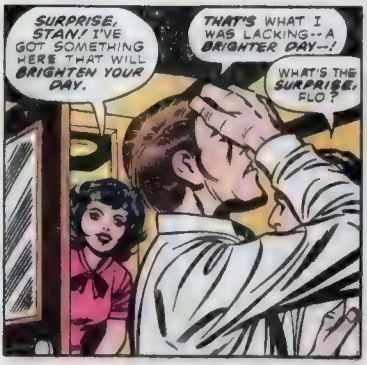
HOW DOES *THAT* GRAB YOU!?

HEY, *STAN*--


D'YA WANT TO SEE THE ULTIMATE AD? I'D LIKE YOU TO CHECK IT, IF YOU HAVE A MINUTE, STAN.
SURE. I'M CHECKING EVERYTHING TODAY.


AFTER ALL, WE MAY BE A TEST CASE FOR THE WILD BLUE YONDER TOMORROW, AND THE TROLLS WILL BE RUNNING THIS BULLPEN!
DID HE TELL YOU ABOUT THE LOONIES, JACK?
LISTEN, LET THEM OPERATE! THEY MIGHT IMPROVE US.


CONSIDERING THE AMOUNT OF WORK THAT'S PILING UP, I CAN USE AN ADDITIONAL SET OF HANDS.
WAIT'LL HE SEES THE OTHER ADS! TWO OF THEM WON'T SCALE DOWN TO SIZE.
AND SOME OF MY CHARACTERS ARE WEARING THE WRONG COSTUMES!

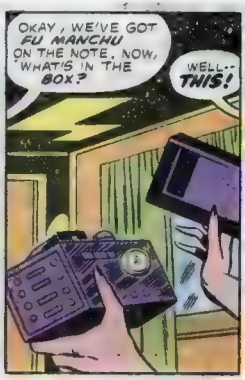

SURPRISE, STAN! I'VE GOT SOMETHING HERE THAT WILL BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY.
THAT'S WHAT I WAS LACKING--A BRIGHTER DAY--!
WHAT'S THE SURPRISE, FLO?

YES, MISS SUNSHINE, WHAT'VE YOU BROUGHT ME THIS TIME? SWEDISH CANDY? A TOY OWL?
WHAT? WHAT?!
WELL, I DON'T REALLY KNOW. I HAVEN'T UNWRAPPED IT YET.
IT COULD BE A BOX OF CIGARS. ANY BETS--?
I'LL JUST TAKE SOME CIGARS.

A FAN LEFT THIS FOR YOU. HE WAS SUCH A NICE MAN--BUT, I DIDN'T CARE MUCH FOR HIS EYES. THEY WERE SORT OF FIXED AND GLARY...
AH, BUT HIS HEART WAS WARM AND MUSHY...
WHY DON'T YOU UNWRAP IT, MY DEAR, AND LAY BARE ITS PRICELESS CONTENTS.

OH, ISN'T THIS A LOVELY BOX! THERE'S A NOTE ON TOP OF IT, TOO.
JUST PUT IT ASIDE, FLO. I'LL GET TO IT LATER.

Y'KNOW, THIS IS PHRASED SO STRANGELY. IT READS LIKE A SLIP YOU'D FIND IN A FORTUNE COOKIE!

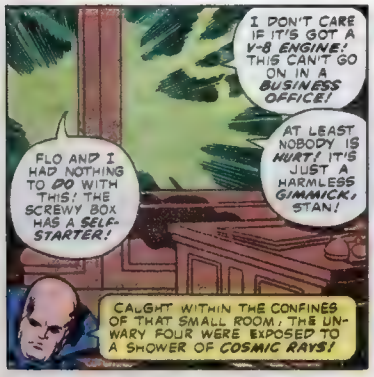

OKAY, WE'VE GOT FU MANCHU ON THE NOTE. NOW, WHAT'S IN THE BOX?
WELL-- THIS!

WHAT DOES SHE MEAN, JACK?
SHE MEANS THAT NOBODY'S INVENTED A NAME FOR THIS THING.
MAYBE IT'S A RADIO?

NO! IT'S SOMETHING ELSE... AND SINCE YOU MENTIONED THAT FANTASY CROWD, I'M GETTING SOME MIGHTY UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS!
FANTASY--!
THAT'S WHAT THE NOTE WAS ABOUT.
HOW DID YOU EVER GUESS IT?

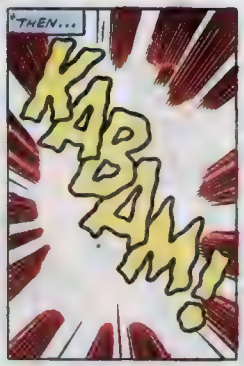
SUDDENLY...
YEEOW!! COME ON, FLO--!
GOODNESS! W-WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

WHAT IN BLAZES HAVE YOU TWO DONE?! THAT THING IS POPPING OFF LIKE A ROMAN CANDLE!


I DON'T CARE IF IT'S GOT A V-8 ENGINE! THIS CAN'T GO ON IN A BUSINESS OFFICE!
AT LEAST NOBODY IS HURT! IT'S JUST A HARMLESS GIMMICK, STAN!
FLO AND I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS! THE SCREWY BOX HAS A SELF-STARTER!
CAUGHT WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THAT SMALL ROOM, THE UNWARY FOUR WERE EXPOSED TO A SHOWER OF COSMIC RAYS!

WE'VE GOT TO SHUT THAT THING OFF!
WHY NOT THROW IT OUT THE WINDOW?
KEEP YOUR SHIRTS ON! I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

IT'S A SIMPLE SOLUTION, BUT IT SHOULD DO THE TRICK!

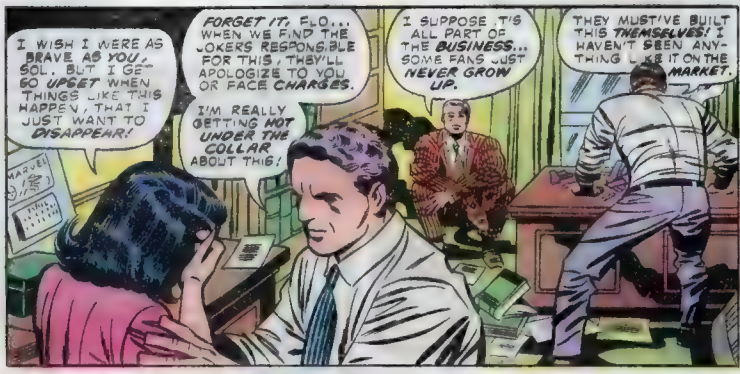

THEN...
KABAM!

YOU STOPPED IT, KIRBY! BUT, YOU ALSO RUINED IT—!
SORRY, STAN, I GUESS I DON'T KNOW MY OWN STRENGTH.

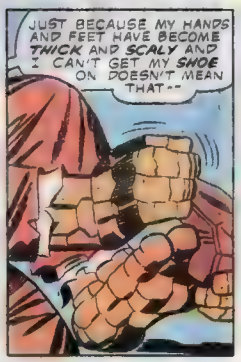
IT DOESN'T MATTER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D HAVE DONE WITH IT, ANYWAY.
IS IT SAFE TO COME OUT NOW?

OF COURSE, IT'S SAFE! WE WERE NEVER IN DANGER.
I WAS SO FRIGHTENED, STAN...

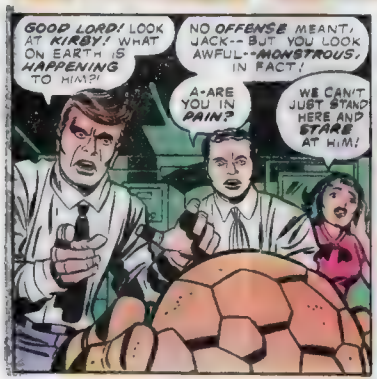
WELL, IT DIDN'T SCARE ME! I JUST GRABBED THIS CHAIR IN CASE THE NUTS WHO SENT THAT BOX SHOWED UP TO HASSLE US.


I WISH I WERE AS BRAVE AS YOU, SOL. BUT I GET SO UPSET WHEN THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN, THAT I JUST WANT TO DISAPPEAR!
FORGET IT, FLO... WHEN WE FIND THE JOKER'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, THEY'LL APOLOGIZE TO YOU OR FACE CHARGES.
I'M REALLY GETTING HOT UNDER THE COLLAR ABOUT THIS!
I SUPPOSE IT'S ALL PART OF THE BUSINESS... SOME FANS JUST NEVER GROW UP.
THEY MUST'VE BUILT THIS THEMSELVES! I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT ON THE MARKET.

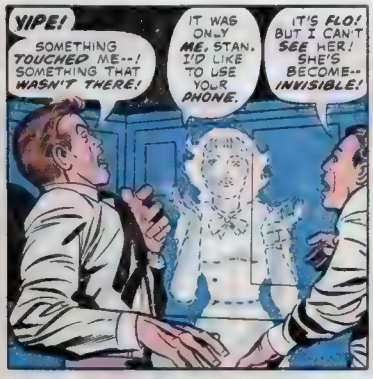
LOONIES AREN'T SHORT ON TALENT! I UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF OUR BEST ASYLUMS HAVE GENIUSES AS TENANTS.
SOL IS RIGHT. LET'S FORGET IT. WE'RE A BIT SHAKEN UP, BUT NO HARM'S BEEN DONE.

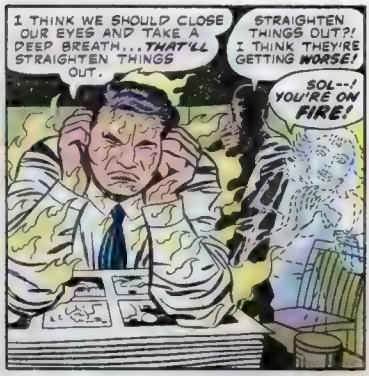

JUST BECAUSE MY HANDS AND FEET HAVE BECOME THICK AND SCALY AND I CAN'T GET MY SHOE ON DOESN'T MEAN THAT--

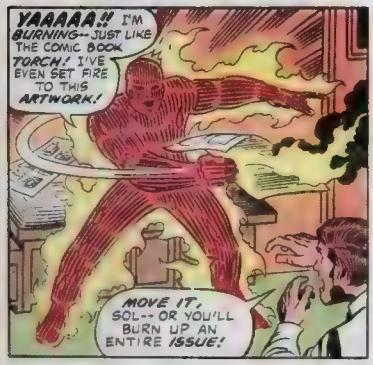
HEY!
THEY ARE THICK AND SCALY--! AND I FEEL LIKE I'M BURSTING OUT OF MY CLOTHES!

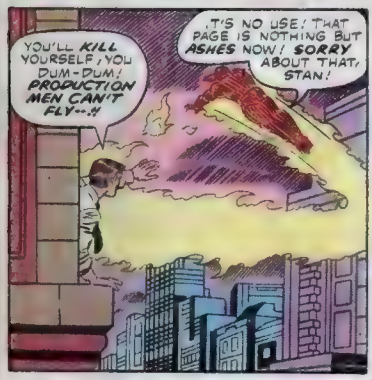

GOOD LORD! LOOK AT KIRBY! WHAT ON EARTH IS HAPPENING TO HIM?!
NO OFFENSE MEANT, JACK-- BUT YOU LOOK AWFUL--MONSTROUS, IN FACT!
A-ARE YOU IN PAIN?
WE CAN'T JUST STAND HERE AND STARE AT HIM!

HE'S IN DESPERATE NEED OF ATTENTION. I'LL CALL THE HOSPITAL RIGHT NOW!
GOOD IDEA, FLO! UH... FLO?
WHERE IS SHE?
SHE'S GONE! I'VE NEVER SEEN HER MOVE THIS FAST!
I DON'T BELIEVE TH-S!









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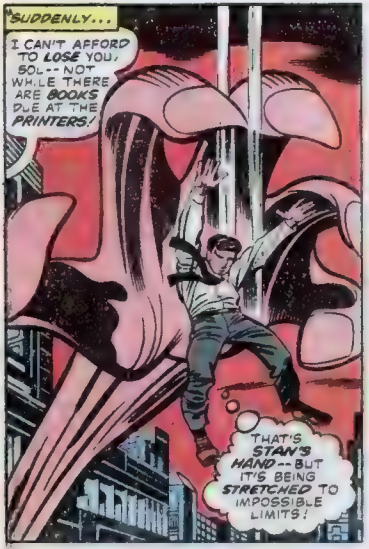
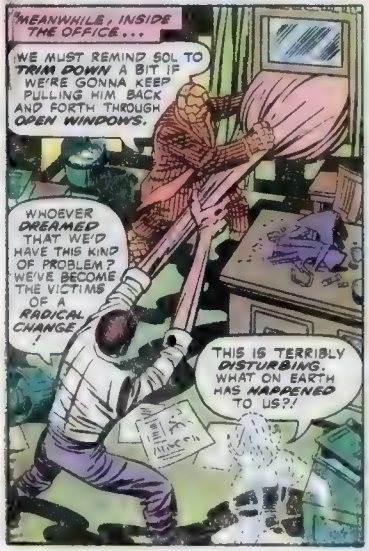

SUDDENLY...
I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE YOU, SOL--NOT WHILE THERE ARE BOOKS DUE AT THE PRINTERS!
THAT'S STAN'S HAND--BUT IT'S BEING STRETCHED TO IMPOSSIBLE LIMITS!

YOU SAVED MY NECK, STAN. I'M REALLY GRATEFUL--BUT DON'T GET ME WRONG WHEN I TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE AS MUCH OF A MESS AS I AM.
YOU'VE BECOME A HUMAN RUBBER BAND!
DO YOU HEAR ME BRAGGING ABOUT IT? NOW--CUT THE CHATTER WHILE I HAUL YOU IN!


MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE OFFICE...
WE MUST REMIND SOL TO TRIM DOWN A BIT IF WE'RE GONNA KEEP PULLING HIM BACK AND FORTH THROUGH OPEN WINDOWS.
WHOEVER DREAMED THAT WE'D HAVE THIS KIND OF PROBLEM? WE'VE BECOME THE VICTIMS OF A RADICAL CHANGE!
THIS IS TERRIBLY DISTURBING. WHAT ON EARTH HAS HAPPENED TO US?!

DON'T LOOK TO ME FOR ANSWERS, FLO! I'VE MERELY BECOME MEANNER AND STRONGER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE.
I'LL DO A LOT BETTER WITH BOTH FEET ON THE GROUND. PUT ME DOWN, JACK! I'M IN NO MOOD FOR CLOWNING.
HOW'RE YA DOING, SOL?
NEITHER AM I. THIS IS HARDLY A LAUGHING MATTER.
I'M REALLY CLOSE TO TEARS! HOW LONG WILL I REMAIN INVISIBLE LIKE THIS--?

NOW THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION! I DON'T EXACTLY RELISH GOING HOME IN THIS SHAPE. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO IF THE CHANGE IS PERMANENT?!

WELL, I CAN APPARENTLY RETURN TO NORMALCY... BUT SUPPOSE I SHOULD FLAME ON AGAIN?! MY NEIGHBORS COULD DECLARE ME A FIRE HAZARD AND FORCE ME TO MOVE!

I THINK OUR TROUBLES BEGAN WHEN THE BOX PUT ON THAT LIGHT SHOW.

LOOK! I'M VISIBLE AGAIN!

PERHAPS OUR TROUBLES ARE OVER!

IT'S A NICE THOUGHT--BUT I'M AFRAID THAT WE'LL BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE FROM NOW ON.

THAT NOTE SHOULD TELL US WHOM WE HAVE TO THANK FOR OUR PREDICAMENT.

NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES, WE'LL TRACK DOWN THIS CROWD, AND SEE THAT THEY CORRECT WHAT THEY'VE DONE!

BUT WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT THEM. HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT FINDING "S" PEOPLE?

SO THAT'S HOW THEY SIGNED THE NOTE--!

GREETINGS! OPEN THIS BOX AND LIVE THE ULTIMATE FANTASY! THE "S" PEOPLE

THEN FLO IS RIGHT! THAT SIGNATURE IS PRACTICALLY NO CLUE AT ALL TO THEIR IDENTITY.

WE KNOW THAT THEY LIKE TO PLANT THESE TRICKY BOXES ON UNSUSPECTING PEOPLE.

IT'S NOT MUCH TO START WITH, BUT IT'S SOMETHING.

SAY! WE'VE ALSO GOT THE BOX AND ITS CONTENTS! DON'T FORGET THAT!

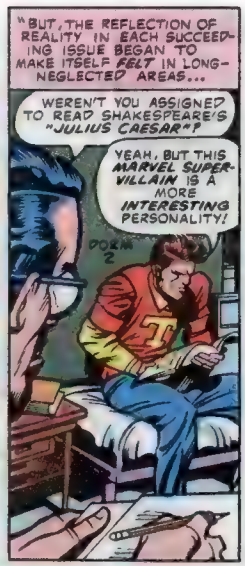
WHY NOT? WE CAN DO FANTASTIC THINGS RIGHT NOW!

GOOD THINKING! WE'RE BEGINNING TO PERCOLATE. WITH TIME AND PATIENCE, WE'LL LEARN HOW TO TRAIL THE "S" PEOPLE.

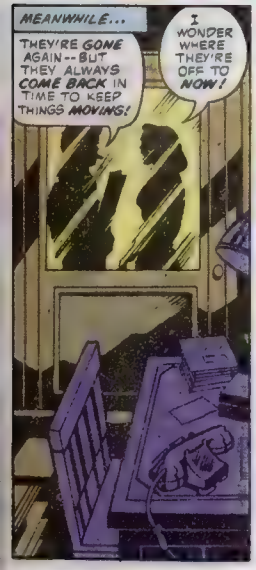
AND IF THE FANTASTIC FOUR CAN'T SEE THIS TO THE FINISH--WHO CAN??

STRANGELY ENOUGH, THIS NOW-FAMOUS TEAM SOON BECAME MORE FAMOUS THAN THEIR FOUR-COLOR COUNTERPARTS--AND THUS DID LIFE ONCE MORE IMITATE ART!
IT'S TIME TO ACT! LET'S TAKE HIM!
DO YOU THINK DR. DOOM KNOWS WE'RE HERE?
HE'LL KNOW IT WHEN I SLIP MY PAWS AROUND HIS STEEL NECK!
AND, AS THE REAL FANTASTIC FOUR BECAME A SHINING SYMBOL OF JUSTICE, SO DID THE COMIC-MAGAZINE CHARACTERS PROSPER, AS WELL!
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF REED RICHARDS, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT STAN WAS LEARNING TO USE MECHANICAL POWER WITH THE SAME ASTOUNDING FLEXIBILITY STORED IN HIS BODY.
POW!
"SUE STORM WAS A FIT PROJECTION OF FLO STEINBERG'S COURAGEOUS DEDICATION TO A VENTURE FILLED WITH COUNTLESS DANGERS.
TO WATCH THE THING AND THE HUMAN TORCH IN ACTION WAS TO REALIZE THAT JACK AND SOL HAD ACHIEVED A GREAT COMMAND OF SPECTACULAR POWER!

THOUSANDS OF NEW READERS FLOCKED TO THE MARVEL BANNER-- NEVER SUSPECTING THAT THE ULTIMATE DRAMA WAS IN PROGRESS WITH A REAL CAST--!
EAT'CHER HEART OUT, GUYS, I GOT THE LAST F.F. MAG ON THE RACKS!
D'YA WANNA SELL IT? NAME YOUR PRICE!

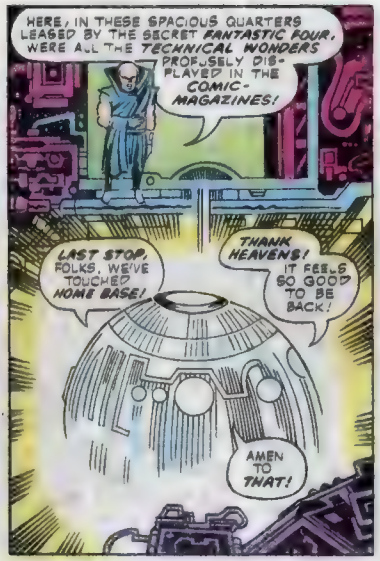

"BUT, THE REFLECTION OF REALITY IN EACH SUCCEEDING ISSUE BEGAN TO MAKE ITSELF FELT IN LONG-NEGLECTED AREAS...
WEREN'T YOU ASSIGNED TO READ SHAKESPEARE'S "JULIUS CAESAR"?
YEAH, BUT THIS MARVEL SUPER-VILLAIN IS A MORE INTERESTING PERSONALITY!

THEN, A VERITABLE TORRENT OF MAIL BEGAN TO POUR INTO AN OFFICE UNPREPARED FOR SUCH RESPONSE...
YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF TODAY'S BATCH. THERE'S MORE ON THE WAY. CAN YOU HANDLE IT?
FRANKLY, NO.
WE'RE EXPECTING MORE HELP.


MEANWHILE...
THEY'RE GONE AGAIN -- BUT THEY ALWAYS COME BACK IN TIME TO KEEP THINGS MOVING!
I WONDER WHERE THEY'RE OFF TO NOW!

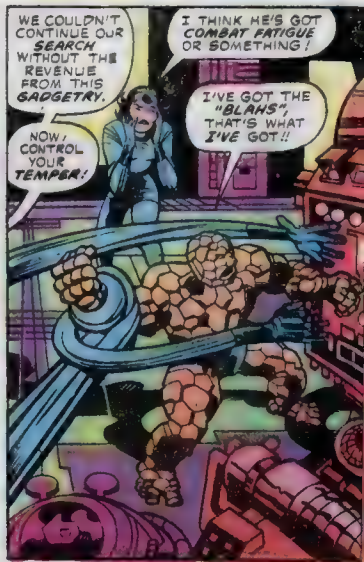
WE DON'T SPEAK ABOUT IT, BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW! LUCKILY, MARIE SEVERIN, JOHNNY ROMITA, AND THIS NEW KID NAMED THOMAS ARE AROUND TO TAKE UP THE SLACK!
WELL... I'LL BE BACK WHEN OUR VANISHERS RETURN.

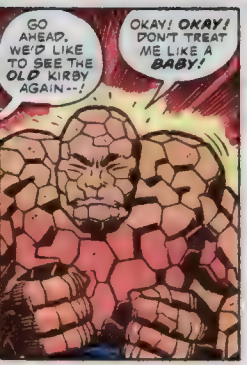
HOWEVER, ON THIS EARTH, THERE STANDS AN EXACT REPLICA OF THE BAXTER BUILDING... AND THAT'S WHERE THE REAL ACTION WAS TAKING PLACE!

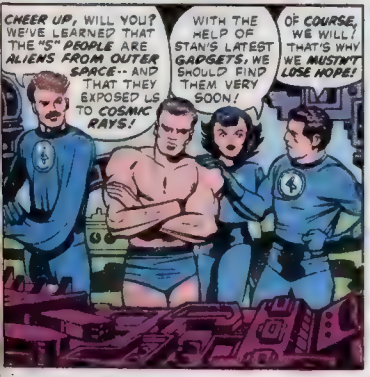

HERE, IN THESE SPACIOUS QUARTERS LEASED BY THE SECRET FANTASTIC FOUR, WERE ALL THE TECHNICAL WONDERS PROFUSELY DISPLAYED IN THE COMIC-MAGAZINES!
LAST STOP, FOLKS. WE'VE TOUCHED HOME BASE!
THANK HEAVENS! IT FEELS SO GOOD TO BE BACK!
AMEN TO THAT!

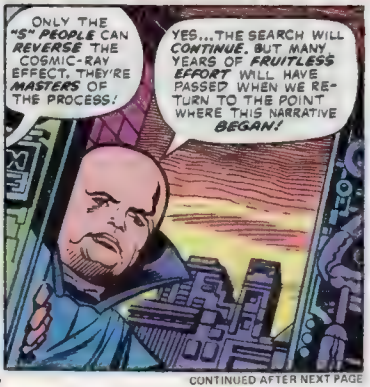
I'D LOVE TO TELL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS ABOUT TRAVELLING IN SUB-SPACE, BUT... THEY'D COMMIT ME!
ANOTHER TRIP, ANOTHER NOTHING-! THIS TIME WE FOUND DRAGON MEN INSTEAD OF "S" PEOPLE!
I'VE GOT A CRICK IN MY NECK FROM PUNCHING OUT THAT ARMY OF BEHEMOTHS!

THIS GALAXY-HOPPING IS BEGINNING TO BUG ME! I'M SICK OF LOOKING AT TOAD-WOMEN, SQUIRREL-MEN, ROBOT-SOLDIERS, AND-- OH YEAH--STAN'S CRAZY MACHINERY—!!
DON'T TOUCH THOSE NEW ATOMIC COMPUTERS!
THEY COST A FORTUNE TO BUILD!


WE COULDN'T CONTINUE OUR SEARCH WITHOUT THE REVENUE FROM THIS GADGETRY.
I THINK HE'S GOT COMBAT FATIGUE OR SOMETHING!
NOW, CONTROL YOUR TEMPER!
I'VE GOT THE "BLAHS", THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOT!!







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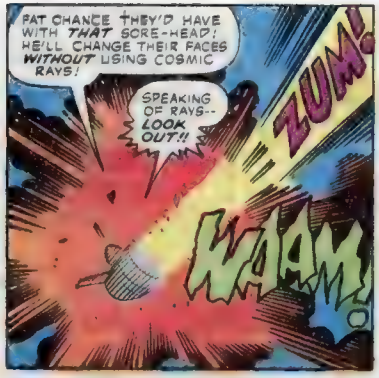
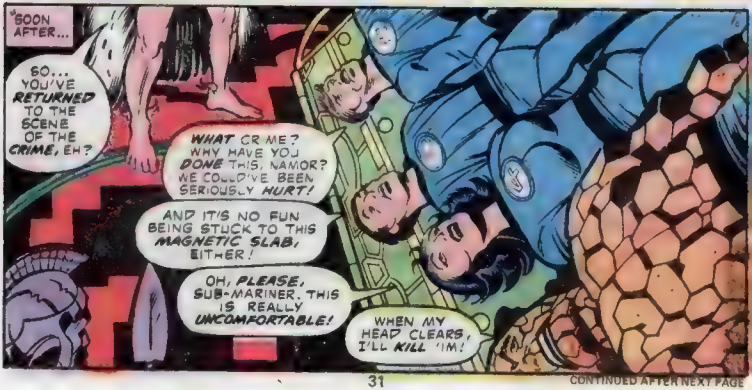
THUS, WE *REJOIN* THE UNREVEALED FOUR-SOME OF THE PRESENT. THEY'VE *LEFT* THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MURROW AND ARE APPROACHING A *NEW DOMAIN* IN THEIR *PRIVATE SUBMARINE*...

STAND BY FOR *ANYTHING!* WE'RE GOING TO STRIKE *PAY DIRT* HERE!

SUPPOSE *SUB-MARINER* STRIKES FIRST! YOU KNOW HOW HE *FEELS* ABOUT OUTSIDERS NOSING AROUND HIS *SUNKEN COUNTRY-CLUB!**

ON THIS ALTERNATE VERSION OF OUR EARTH, THE **SUB-MARINER AND OTHER **VILLAINS** HAVE REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS.*
--JACK & ROY.





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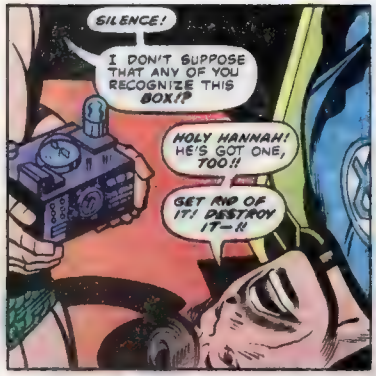
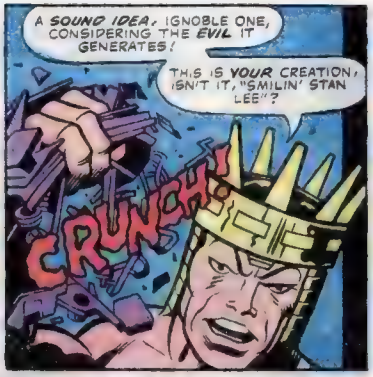
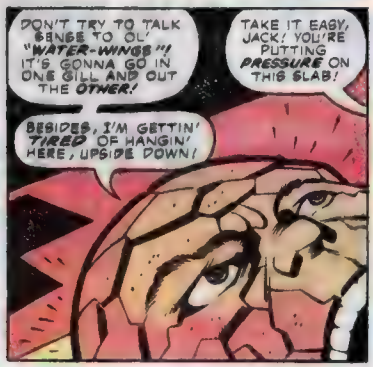

SILENCE!
I DON'T SUPPOSE THAT ANY OF YOU RECOGNIZE THIS BOX!?
HOLY HANNAH! HE'S GOT ONE, TOO!!
GET RID OF IT! DESTROY IT—!!

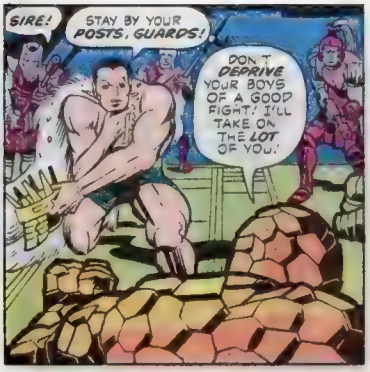

A SOUND IDEA, IGNOBLE ONE, CONSIDERING THE EVIL IT GENERATES!
THIS IS YOUR CREATION, ISN'T IT, "SMILIN' STAN LEE"?
CRUNCH!

OH, NO! STAN HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH SUCH A TERRIBLE THING! WHY, HIS MACHINES ARE SO CUTE THAT YOU WANT TO CUDDLE THEM!
WE CAME HERE TO WARN YOU ABOUT THOSE BOXES, IN FACT, WE WERE HOPING TO CATCH WHOEVER'S PLANTING THEM!
THAT'S THE TRUTH, SUBBY BOY!

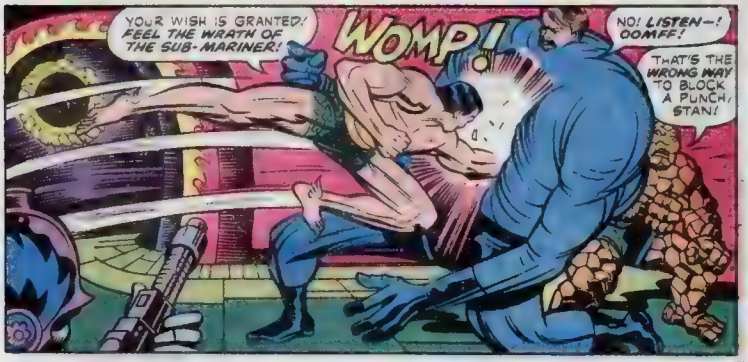

DON'T TRY TO TALK SENSE TO OL' "WATER-WINGS"! IT'S GONNA GO IN ONE GILL AND OUT THE OTHER!
TAKE IT EASY, JACK! YOU'RE PUTTING PRESSURE ON THIS SLAB!
BESIDES, I'M GETTIN' TIRED OF HANGIN' HERE, UPSIDE DOWN!

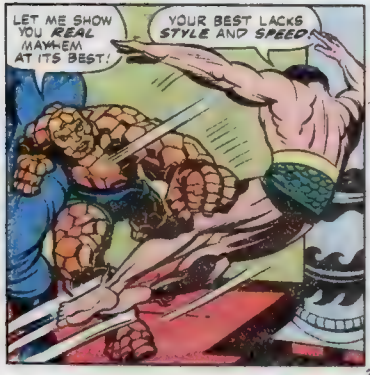
SUDDENLY...
KRAAK!

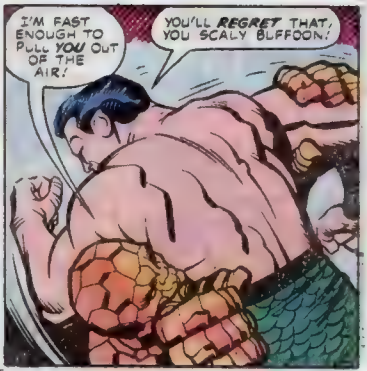
OH BOY! I THINK KIRBY JUST BLEW OUR CHANCES OF CONVINCING THIS GUY!
LET HIM DO HIS WORST! IT CAN'T BE AS BAD AS THIS HEADACHE.
ONE SIDE, FLO! I CAN REASON WITH HIM!


SIRE!
STAY BY YOUR POSTS, GUARDS!
DON'T DEPRIVE YOUR BOYS OF A GOOD FIGHT! I'LL TAKE ON THE LOT OF YOU!

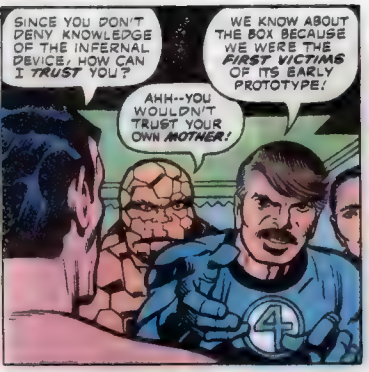
HAHAHAH—! NOW THAT WE'VE HAD OUR LAUGHS, I THINK WE SHOULD GET DOWN TO SERIOUS DISCUSSION!
THEY'RE NOT LAUGHING, STAN. IN FACT, THEY SEEM VERY ANGRY WITH EACH OTHER!
MAKE YOUR PLAY, "FISH-FACE"!


YOUR WISH IS GRANTED! FEEL THE WRATH OF THE SUB-MARINER!
WOMP!!
NO! LISTEN—! OOMFF!
THAT'S THE WRONG WAY TO BLOCK A PUNCH, STAN!

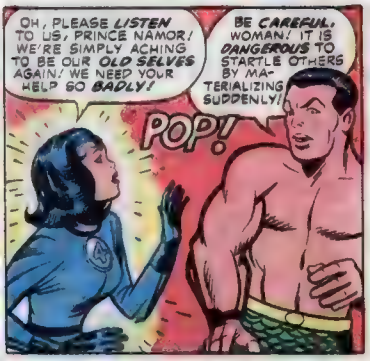

LET ME SHOW YOU REAL MAYHEM AT ITS BEST!
YOUR BEST LACKS STYLE AND SPEED!


I'M FAST ENOUGH TO PULL YOU OUT OF THE AIR!
YOU'LL REGRET THAT, YOU SCALY BUFFOON!

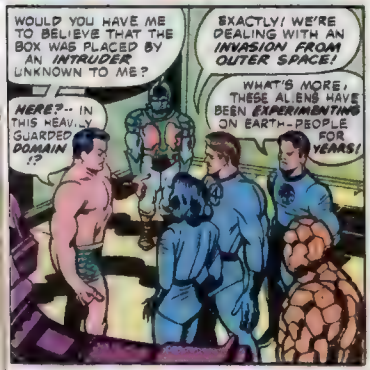
AT THAT MOMENT...
WE'RE NOT HERE TO WATCH YOU TWO BEHAVE LIKE SCHOOL-BOYS!
SHE'S THROWN A FORCE SHIELD BETWEEN US!
DON'T LET THAT STOP YOU! PLY OVER IT—!
I'LL TAKE OVER, FLO!
KEEPING THOSE NUTS APART BY MENTAL MEANS COULD GIVE YOU A BRAIN CLOT!
IT WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME INVISIBLE! HONESTLY, I FEEL SO FRUSTRATED, I COULD CRY!
YOU'VE HAD IT, DUM-DUMS! CALL IT QUITS, OR I'LL SERVE YOU BOTH AS SHISH KEBAB!
WHAT IS THIS!? WHY IS EVERYONE SO UPTIGHT WHEN I GET THE CHANCE TO DO MY STUFF?
YOU ALWAYS DO IT AT THE WRONG TIME, THAT'S WHY!
WELL, GOOD FIGHTS DON'T GROW ON TREES, YA KNOW! THIS ONE COULD BE A CLASSIC, IF YOU'D ONLY STAY OUT OF IT!
NO! SINCE THEY WISH TO BE INCLUDED, THEN SO BE IT!
YOU'LL HAVE TO BUST MY SCALES BEFORE YOU HARM ANY OF THEM!
PLOTTERS! SCHEMERS! PURVEYORS OF EVIL! DID YOU THINK THAT I WAS IGNORANT OF MECHANISMS DESIGNED TO CAST COSMIC RAYS!?
HOLD IT, SUBBY! WE'RE ONLY TOO HAPPY THAT YOU DISCOVERED THE BOX IN TIME!
WELL, I'M NOT!


SINCE YOU DON'T DENY KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFERNAL DEVICE, HOW CAN I TRUST YOU?
WE KNOW ABOUT THE BOX BECAUSE WE WERE THE FIRST VICTIMS OF ITS EARLY PROTOTYPE!
AHH--YOU WOULDN'T TRUST YOUR OWN MOTHER!

THE KIDS AND I HAVE GIVEN A LARGE CHUNK OF OUR LIVES TO AN EFFORT TO FIND THE GUILTY PARTIES IN THIS ROTTEN SCHEME!
YOUR VOICE HAS A CERTAIN HUMBLE QUALITY! CAN IT BE THAT YOU'RE SINCERE?

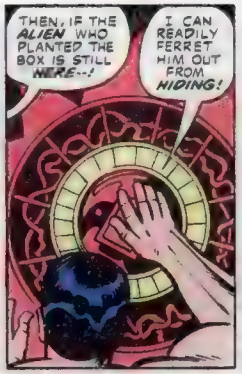

OH, PLEASE LISTEN TO US, PRINCE NAMOR! WE'RE SIMPLY AGHING TO BE OUR OLD SELVES AGAIN! WE NEED YOUR HELP SO BADLY!
BE CAREFUL, WOMAN! IT IS DANGEROUS TO STARTLE OTHERS BY MATERIALIZING SUDDENLY!
POP!

YOU DON'T FOOL ME, YOU BIG HANDSOME TEDDY BEAR! I KNOW THAT YOUR SAVAGE TEMPER IS A COVER-UP FOR A HEART THAT'S WARM AND JUST!


WOULD YOU HAVE ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE BOX WAS PLACED BY AN INTRUDER UNKNOWN TO ME?
EXACTLY! WE'RE DEALING WITH AN INVASION FROM OUTER SPACE!
WHAT'S MORE, THESE ALIENS HAVE BEEN EXPERIMENTING ON EARTH-PEOPLE FOR YEARS!
HERE?-- IN THIS HEAVILY GUARDED DOMAIN !?

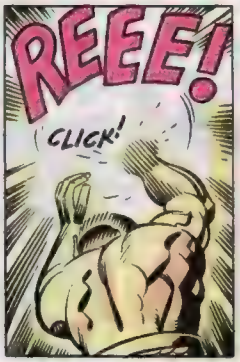
IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, THEY MAY HAVE DECEIVED MY HIDDEN DETECTORS... BUT NEVER THIS ONE!
UNCOVER THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL MONITOR!
DONE, SIRE!

THIS IS MORE THAN A SUPER-SENSITIVE DEVICE. IT'S DESIGNED TO ACTIVATE TO MAXIMUM IN THE PRESENCE OF LIFE NOT NATIVE TO THIS EARTH!


THEN, IF THE ALIEN WHO PLANTED THE BOX IS STILL HERE--!
I CAN READILY FERRET HIM OUT FROM HIDING!

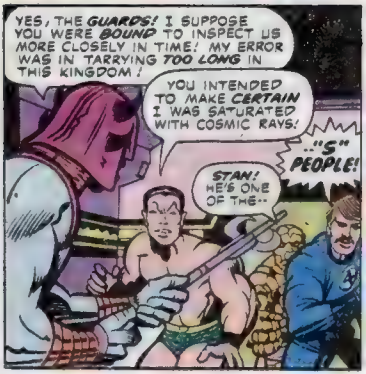
AT LAST! THIS COULD BE THE CLIMAX IN A LIFE-LONG SEARCH!
THE DETECTOR IS GENERATING ITS CHARGE OF ENERGY!

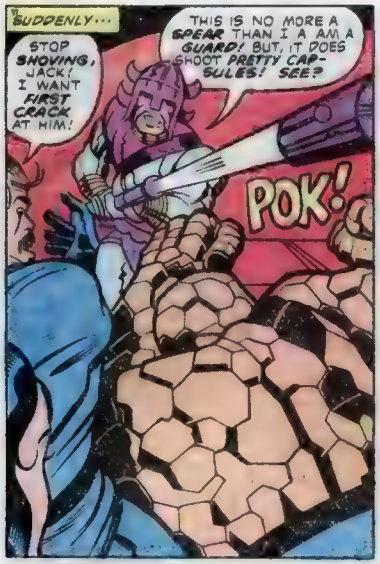
IF THE ALIEN IS AMONG US, THE BUILD-UP WILL CONTINUE UNTIL IT REACHES THE ALARM LEVEL!
REEEE!..

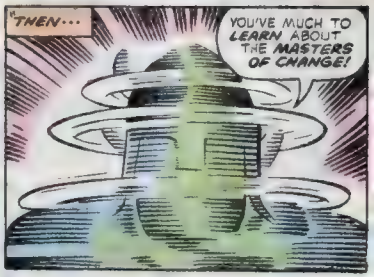

REEE!
CLICK!

BY POSEIDON'S BEARD! WE'VE NOT ONLY FOUND OUR QUARRY-- BUT, HE'S HERE IN THIS VERY CHAMBER!

WOW! WHO CAN IT BE? I KNOW IT'S NOT ONE OF US; WE'VE GOT CREDIT CARDS TO PROVE IT, EH, STAN?
THE ALIEN IS CLEVERLY DISGUISED, THAT'S FOR SURE!
NATCH! THE INVADERS CAN PROBABLY CHANGE THEMSELVES AS WELL AS OTHERS!
THE GUARDS!


YES, THE GUARDS! I SUPPOSE YOU WERE BOUND TO INSPECT US MORE CLOSELY IN TIME! MY ERROR WAS IN TARRYING TOO LONG IN THIS KINGDOM!
YOU INTENDED TO MAKE CERTAIN I WAS SATURATED WITH COSMIC RAYS!
..."S" PEOPLE!
STAN! HE'S ONE OF THE--





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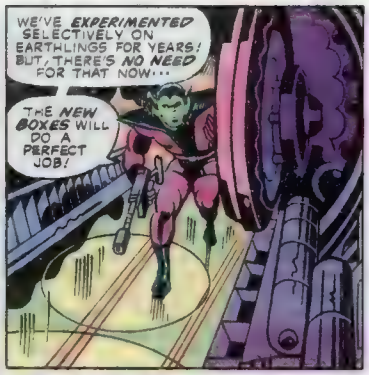
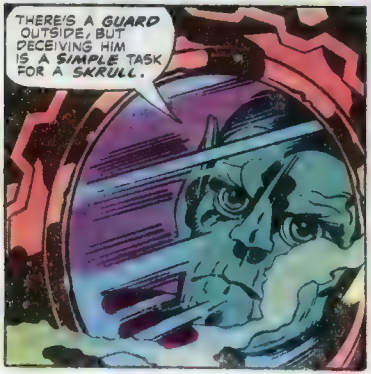
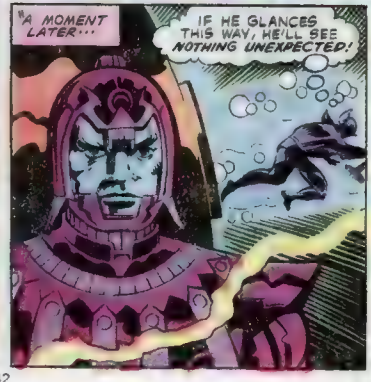
HOW OFTEN YOU'VE SKIRMISHED WITH US, NEVER DREAMING THAT ONE OF OUR UNITS WAS DEVELOPING A CLANDESTINE PROJECT THAT WOULD BRING YOUR SPECIES TO ITS KNEES!

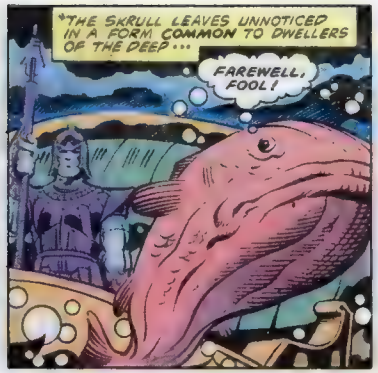

WE'VE EXPERIMENTED SELECTIVELY ON EARTHLINGS FOR YEARS! BUT, THERE'S NO NEED FOR THAT NOW...
THE NEW BOXES WILL DO A PERFECT JOB!

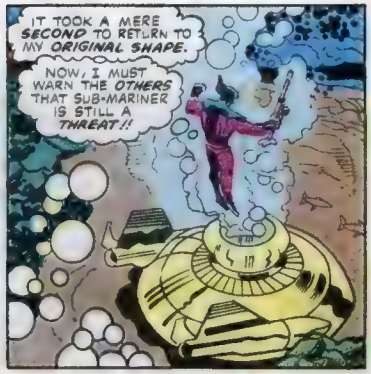
PERFECT PLANNING IS THE MARK OF THE SKRULL! THAT'S WHY I WORE THIS PROTECTIVE FILM WHEN I FIRED THE VACUUM PELLET!

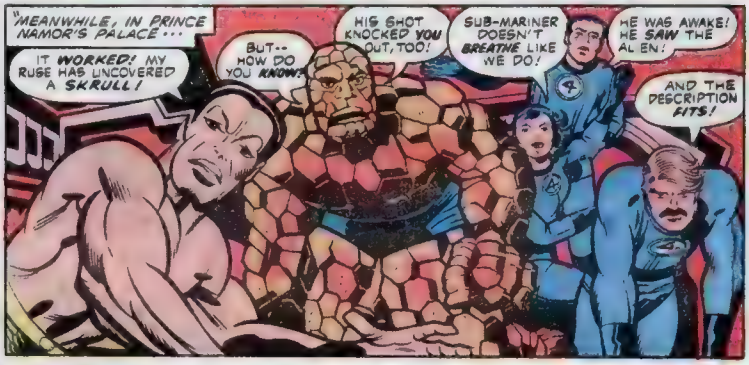
THE DETECTOR ON THAT AIR LOCK DOOR WILL NEVER BETRAY MY PRESENCE.
SOUND CAN'T BE HEARD IN A VACUUM!
ROK!

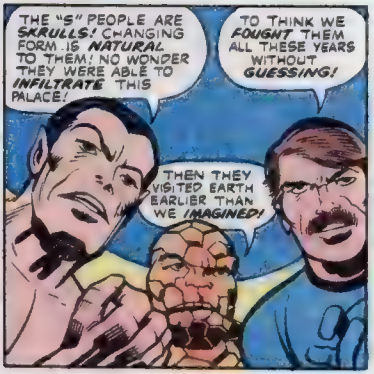

THERE'S A GUARD OUTSIDE, BUT DECEIVING HIM IS A SIMPLE TASK FOR A SKRULL.


A MOMENT LATER...
IF HE GLANCES THIS WAY, HE'LL SEE NOTHING UNEXPECTED!


*THE SKRULL LEAVES UNNOTICED IN A FORM COMMON TO DWELLERS OF THE DEEP...
FAREWELL, FOOL!


IT TOOK A MERE SECOND TO RETURN TO MY ORIGINAL SHAPE.
NOW, I MUST WARN THE OTHERS THAT SUB-MARINER IS STILL A THREAT!!


*MEANWHILE, IN PRINCE NAMOR'S PALACE...
IT WORKED! MY RUSE HAS UNCOVERED A SKRULL!
BUT-- HOW DO YOU KNOW?
HIS SHOT KNOCKED YOU OUT, TOO!
SUB-MARINER DOESN'T BREATHE LIKE WE DO!
HE WAS AWAKE! HE SAW THE ALIEN!
AND THE DESCRIPTION FITS!


THE "S" PEOPLE ARE SKRULLS! CHANGING FORM IS NATURAL TO THEM! NO WONDER THEY WERE ABLE TO INFILTRATE THIS PALACE!
TO THINK WE FOUGHT THEM ALL THESE YEARS WITHOUT GUESSING!
THEN THEY VISITED EARTH EARLIER THAN WE IMAGINED!

YOU WERE THEIR FIRST EXPERIMENT... BUT YOU SURVIVED IT! I SUSPECT THAT THEIR NEW VICTIMS ARE NOT THAT FORTUNATE!
WE SAW THEIR LAST ONE. IT WASN'T PRETTY. IF YOU CAN FIND 'EM, WE'RE WITH YOU!

SOON AFTER...
THE INSTRUMENTS IN THIS CRAFT CAN FOLLOW THE ENERGY TRAIL OF ANY MOVING OBJECT.
WHATEVER THAT SKRULL USED IN HIS ESCAPE SHOULD HAVE AN ODOR ALL ITS OWN!

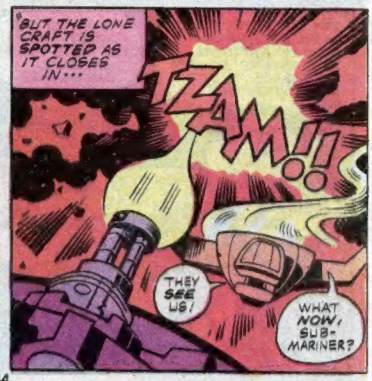
STAN'S GOT AN IDEA THAT THEY'VE BUILT SOME KIND OF INSTALLATION DOWN HERE.
THAT SEEMS LOGICAL. IT MAY WELL BE A PLANT FOR THE MASS PRODUCTION OF THEIR DEVILISH BOXES!

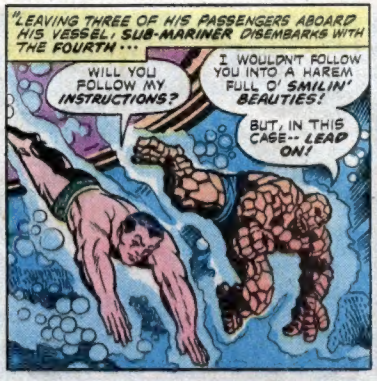
THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE MASS DISTRIBUTION! THEY INTEND TO CHANGE EVERY HUMAN ON EARTH.
YOU MEAN EVERYONE MIGHT END UP LIKE DOCTOR MURROW?
COULD BE, FLO!

MY INDICATORS POINT TO THE CAVES OF ANCIENT SUBTERRANIA AS THE DESTINATION OF FLEEING SKRULL.
WE OF THE DEEPS SHUN THIS AREA.

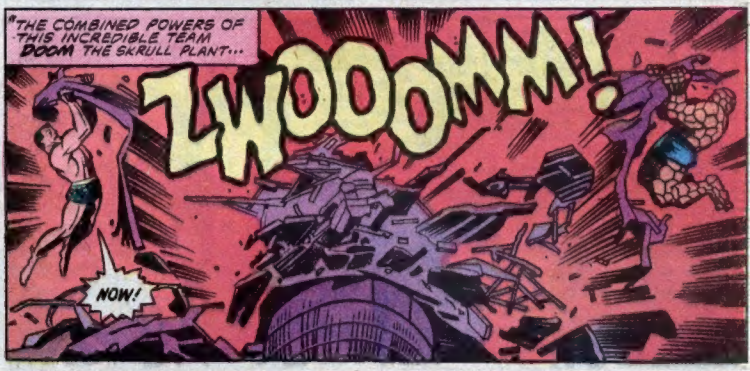
ITS UNSAVORY HISTORY MAKES IT AN IDEAL CHOICE FOR OUTSIDERS WHO WISH TO WORK UNDISTURBED!

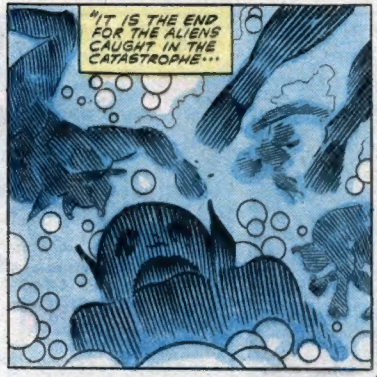
HE'S RIGHT! THERE IT IS! --THERE'S THE SKRULL FACTORY!
IT MUST BE WELL GUARDED. BUT, WE HAVE THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ON OUR SIDE!
WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE--! LET'S TAKE 'EM!


BUT THE LONE CRAFT IS SPOTTED AS IT CLOSES IN...
TZAM!!
THEY SEE US!
WHAT NOW, SUB-MARINER?


"LEAVING THREE OF HIS PASSENGERS ABOARD HIS VESSEL, SUB-MARINER DISEMBARKS WITH THE FOURTH...
WILL YOU FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS?
I WOULDN'T FOLLOW YOU INTO A HAREM FULL O' SMILIN' BEAUTIES!
BUT, IN THIS CASE-- LEAD ON!

IF WE RUPTURE THIS CENTRAL SECTION, THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE WILL COLLAPSE!
LET'S DO IT--!
RRIPP!


"THE COMBINED POWERS OF THIS INCREDIBLE TEAM DOOM THE SKRULL PLANT...
ZWOOOMM!
NOW!


"IT IS THE END FOR THE ALIENS CAUGHT IN THE CATASTROPHE...

"SUDDENLY, THE DEEPS ARE ROCKED BY A POWERFUL TREMOR WHICH BRINGS TO THE SURFACE THE SATANIC PRODUCTS OF AN EVIL DREAM...

BRAAAMM!
"A SECOND SHOCK FROM BELOW TRIGGERS A CHAIN REACTION AMONG THE FLOATING MASS OF BOXES···THEN, THEY ARE GONE!

"MEANWHILE, IN SUB-MARINER'S CRAFT.
DO YOU HEAR THAT? IT MEANS WE'VE DEEP-SIXED THE ENTIRE SKRULL OPERATION!
OH! WHEN I THINK OF WHAT THOSE BOXES WOULD HAVE DONE TO EVERYBODY—!
THIS MIGHT HAVE BECOME A WORLD OF MINDLESS ZOMBIES!

OF COURSE, THAT DOESN'T SOLVE OUR PROBLEM. WE STILL HAVE TO REGAIN OUR FORMER STABILITY!
BE THANKFUL FOR WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED HERE!
BESIDES, WE'VE LEARNED WHO THE "S" PEOPLE ARE.
YOU CAN HARDLY EXPECT THE SKRULLS TO HELP US··· THEY'RE SO CRUEL!
THEN WE'LL HELP OURSELVES TO THEIR BEST-KEPT SECRET: MASTERY OF THE COSMIC RAY!

THUS, ON THIS EARTH, UNDAUNTED SPIRITS REMAIN STRONG AND ABLE TO PURSUE A MONUMENTAL TASK!

HUMANITY IN ANY DIMENSION IS FOREVER CONCERNED WITH ITS TRUE IDENTITY. IT CLINGS TO IT WITH TENACITY, AND WOULD SACRIFICE ALL TO RETAIN IT!

I HAVE SEEN THIS HAPPEN IN ENDLESS SUCCESSION-- FOR, I AM THE UNIVERSAL EYE···
I AM THE WATCHER!
NEXT ISSUE: AT LAST! WHAT IF... CONAN WALKED THE EARTH TODAY??

WHY NOT?

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

ROY THOMAS
EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD
ASSISTANT EDITOR

SPECIAL NOSTALGIC NOTE: This issue marks, we think, an important milestone in Marvel history— as we're sure a few zillion of you will already have noticed (so we won't waste much time reminding you). Namely, for the first time in some eight years, Jack Kirby— the original awesome artist on THE FANTASTIC FOUR— returns to drawing Marvel's first superteam, if only for the space of a single (and rather offbeat) issue. It also represents, in its own way, the first time Jack has *written* an F.F. story as well. It came about like this:

Almost since the beginning of the WHAT IF series, Rascally Roy had wanted to do a story in which the Marvel Bullpen gained the powers of the F.F. His own notion was to feature Stan as Mr. Fantastic, Jack as the Thing, Flo Steinberg (or Marie Severin) as the Invisible Girl, and his rollickin' self as the youthful, blond Human Torch (for obvious reasons). In an effort to devote his scripting time to other mags, however, Roy decided recently to offer the concept to Jack— who altered it by replacing Roy with Sol Brodsky (since Sol has been with the Bullpen off and on since the early 60's, and Jack knows him somewhat better) and coming up with his own unique plot and approach. As for Roy— well, except for a bit of re-writing here and there (aided by the parallel-worlds concepts of neo-assistant editor Mark Gruenwald), he's been content to read, savor, and enjoy. Hope you are doing the same.

Now, to catch up, here are some letters on WHAT IF #7-8:

Congratulations to Roy Thomas, Don Glut, Rick Hoberg, and everyone else involved with an excellent seventh issue of WHAT IF, starring Spider-Man. I especially liked the way you had the story flowing from the characters of the protagonists instead of placing them in some artificial situation. This has been a very healthy trend in many Marvels lately, and I'm glad to see it used here.

Jerome Wilson
4524 Kinmount Rd.
Lanham, MD 20801

WHAT IF has matured into a fine, enjoyable comic. In my opinion, #4 was the best issue to date. Don Glut's writing has peaked with ish #7, which was really a fantastic tale, showing that none of the other three people had the skill and qualities of Peter Parker.

Peter Bruno
(No address given)

I just wanted you to know that WHAT IF #8 was great! Not because of the Daredevil story but (of course) because of the Man-Spider mini-saga! The story was truly one of my favorite Marvel funny stories; the script was good and the art was even better. It was *not* just another funny animal story. Scott Shaw (!) did a terrific job. Bring back NOT BRAND ECHH!

John Matthews
(No address given)

I thoroughly enjoyed WHAT IF #8, since it's the first time I ever picked up a Daredevil story. I liked the happy ending, too. That's always a good sign; things are getting a bit too morbid nowadays in some circles. And then there was that fantastic farce you created about Man-Spider. Ridiculous, unusual, unique, and very good! It's things like this that make me think Earth could survive a little while longer on humor alone.

Leslie Williams
#2 1628-38 St. S.W.
Calgary, Alberta Canada

If you feel proud of yourselves about WHAT IF #8, you have every right to! "The 'Mazing Man-Spider" was definitely the funniest thing I've read in comics since NOT BRAND ECHH and HOWARD THE DUCK. Webster Weaver, J. Jonah Jackass, and the radiation-crazed human kept me in stitches. Scott Shaw is someone you should keep around for a while; having him do some more WHAT IF satires is the smartest thing you could do!

Don Dewell
5448 Jutland Dr.
San Diego, CA 92117

The Daredevil yarn in WHAT IF #8 — okay, I'll give ya a B-plus. The tale was good, and I enjoyed Spidey's crossover. The Man-Spider story, though, was A-plus! So when do we see MAN-SPIDER #1 from Marvel?

"Ace" Gary
Flushing, NY

"What If the World Knew Daredevil Is Blind?" — well, for one thing, Matt Murdock would probably have had that surgery 'way back when. And then he and Karen would probably have gotten married. No offense, Don, but I'd rather read one of your KULL stories, as I wasn't all that impressed with this one. I will say one thing, though: Your story was a damn sight better than that six-page abortion by Scott Shaw. Take offense, Scott— you too, Roy— because from now on I'm checking the back of future WHAT IF's before I buy them. And you better believe that if I see another (groan) funny-animal story where there should have been added depth to the first story, I'll just pass up the whole blamed ish. In other words, thanks but no thanks.

Ted Ray Christiansen
5240 1/2 Denny Ave.
N. Hollywood, CA 91601

I just had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed "What If the Spider Had Been Bitten by a Radioactive Human?" I laughed myself sick! I don't have time to mention all the little touches that tickled my funnybone, but I must mention one: the emblem on Man-Spider's costume. My life hasn't been a bed of roses lately, so I need all the humor I can get. Thanks for making my day!

Kathleen J. Springer
Langhorne, PA